

AN
ADDRESS

TO THE
HEADS OF FAMILIES

ON THE
NECESSITY OF FAMILY RELIGION.

ALSO,
AN INTERESTING DISCOURSE ON
WEEKLY CLASS MEETINGS.

" With joy may we our course pursue,
" And keep the crown of life in view;
" That crown, which in one hour repays
" The labour of ten thousand days.

" Should bonds or death obstruct our way,
" Unmov'd their terrors we'll survey,
" And the last hour improve for thee,
" The last of life, or liberty."

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INTRODUCTION.

THE Editor will make no apology for attempting to spread this plain Tract on family religion. Let those who believe their bibles gainsay it if they can—if they cannot, they must account for disregarding it.

Religion is not, at present, so much in danger from persecution as flattery—hence a universal relaxation amongst its professors. Hence few have zeal enough to support the most important parts of family religion with seriousness and constancy.

Regular morning and evening prayer, with a perusal of the scriptures, are far from being general.

Fewer still enter upon the laborious work of instructing and catechising.

It is not owing to this that the children of many religious parents differ very little from others?

God justly withholds that obedience and affection, authority, properly used, usually obtains.

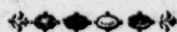
Children and servants break through slight restraints, and rush into a career of iniquity: parents, too late, regret their want of early discipline and instruction.

Hath not this been a principal source of the infidelity and prophaneness of the day?

Members of religious families have only known enough of religion to hate and despise it: their guardians lost their opportunity of acquainting with its principles, so as to leave that information in their judgment that no misrepresentations of piety would efface.

AN

A N.
A D D R E S S
T O T H E
HEADS OF FAMILIES.



THESE reflections in the introduction naturally connect themselves with addressing the heads of families, in the language of the author. To them he says,

Exalt godliness in thy family. If once Christ be chief in thy heart, I am confident he will, to thy utmost power, be so in thy house; that thou art *really*, which thou art *relatively*. Labour that thy children and servants may know and serve God. Dwell with thy wife “as a man of knowledge, as “ heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.” 1 Pet. iii. 7. Bring up thy children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Ephes. vi. 4. Teach thy servants their duty to God and their own souls. Consider these are the laws of the righteous God; and ere long when thou shalt leave all the dying and lying vanities of this world, thou must give an account in the other world how thou hast obeyed them. God hath committed a great trust to thee, even the charge of the souls of all thy family; and doth not thine heart tremble to think of soul-blood, of soul-murder! I assure thee thou mayest be as truly and really guilty of their deaths and damnations by starving them, as by poisoning them. I mean by not instructing, catechising and principaling them in the things of God, by not praying with them, and overseeing that they mind the worship of God, as in making them drunk, and teaching them to steal and swear.

For thy children, dost thou not know that they are born children of wrath, and heirs of hell? And canst thou be quiet till thou seest in them some signs and hopes of regeneration, an interest in Christ, and thereby a right to heaven! When thou readeſt of Herod, how he murdered poor children, thou condemneſt him; thou thinkeſt, Ah hard-hearted Herod! But doſt not thou do ten thousand times worſe, in murdering the ſouls and bodies of thy dear children for ever? Ah hard-hearted, ah bloody father! Herod was a man of bowels, a merciful man to thee. Is it any wonder to hear, ſaith one, of that ſhip ſunk, or daſhed upon a rock, that was put to ſea without card or compaſs; nor is it a wonder to hear children ſinking in perdition, who are thruſt into the world, which is a ſea of temptations, without any knowledge of God and their duty. One would think every time thou readeſt and heareſt of the extremity and eternity of hell's torments, of the multitudes that muſt undergo them, of the few even of thoſe within the viſible church that ſhall be ſaved, and of the difficulty of obtaining ſalvation, that thy loins ſhould tremble, and thy joints ſmite together; that thy head, yea heart ſhould ake for fear of any of thy dear children ſhould be among thoſe many that muſt drink that cup of the Lord's pure wrath; and that thou ſhouldeſt be reſtleſs night and day in wreſtling with God, and in inſtructing them, in uſing all means to prevent their endleſs ruin; ſurely if thou haſt a ſpark of true love to thy children, thus it would be with thee.

And for thy ſervants, unleſs thou art careful that they ſerve the Lord, they are but little beholden to thee for thy ſervice; thou giv'eſt them (poſſibly) food and outward things convenient, but doſt thou not do as much for thy cattle? And is it, thinkeſt thou, enough to do no more for thoſe ſouls which muſt live in unſpeakable pain or pleaſure for ever, then for thy beaſts? If he that provideth not for the bodies of his family, be worſe than an infidel, 1 Tim. v. 8. ſurely he that provideth not for their ſouls is akin to the devil; ſay not, they are ſtubborn and will not be taught; haſt thou not power in thy hands either to teach them, or turn them out of doors? Let none ſerve thee that will not ſerve God. Thou wilt not keep a ſervant that knoweth not how to do
thy

thy work, at least if he will not learn, and then follow it with diligence. Now let thy conscience be judge; is not God's work (the pleasing and glorifying his infinite Majesty) of far greater concernment then thy greatest and weightiest work? and darest thou keep one that neither knoweth how to do it, nor will learn? Follow the man after God's own heart, Psal. ci. 2, 9. "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart; mine eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me." It is said of Constantine (that in this he was truly great) that he would have his whole court gathered together, and cause the scriptures to be read to them, and instruction to be given them from the word of God.

Besides, but if thou didst but regard thy own temporal good, thou wouldst instruct thy servants and children in spiritual things; for they that are unfaithful to their master and father on earth; they that make no conscience of their duty to God, but rob him of his service and worship, will never make conscience of their duty to thee, but if they have opportunity, will rob thee of thy time, service and goods.

Be sure that thou perform family duties, as praying, reading, and the like, morning and evening; do not serve the flesh and the world all day, and then put God off with a few sleepy petitions at night; the command is, Pray continually, 1 Thess. v. 17. *Daniel* was at it three times a day, Dan. vi. 10. *David* seven times a day, Psal. cxix. 264. God's mercies are renewed on the every morning, and should not thy prayers and praises be renewed every morning? Doth not the preservation of thy family every night, deserve family acknowledgment in the morn? Wearisome nights are appointed to others; the beds of others prove their graves, thou and thine might have awoken in hell; doth this distinguishing mercy deserve no thanks? Is not thy family every day liable to many dangers, both bodily and spiritual? Doth it not need pitying, sanctifying, pardoning, directing, preventing mercy every day, nay every moment? And is not all this worth a prayer? Upon no account neglect the offering up of these morning and evening sacrifices; let thy prayers, and of the rest in the family, come up before the

Incense in the morning like incense, and the lifting up of thy hands at night as an even sacrifice.

(Do not say, as sometimes I have heard of thee, that thou canst not spare time for the duties, thy family is great, and thou canst not get them altogether, thy business is great, and a little time spent this way may wrong thee; I answer thee,

1. Canst thou get all thy family together twice a day to set meals for their bodies, and canst not thou get them together twice a day for set meals (family duties) for their souls?

2. What greater or weightier business canst thou have, when the working out the salvation of thy own, and the souls committed to thy charge; are not the most important affairs thou canst possibly deal about, but trifles to this?

3. Was not David's family greater than thine, and his occasions weightier; and yet he could find time (though a king) for family duties, Psal. ci. 9. He and his queen did both instruct their child in the things of God, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Prov. iv. 3. to 10. Prov. xxxi. If thou art poor, and sayest thou hast to provide for thy family, tell me, hast thou time to eat, and drink, and work, and sleep, and no time to work out thy salvation, to fit thy soul for death, for judgment, for eternity? If thy house were in a flame, thou wouldst not let it burn, and say, I have no time to quench it: If thy neighbour call thee to sit, or talk, or dine, or it may be to go to the alehouse with him, thou dost not answer him, I must provide for my family, I have no time: but when thy Maker and Preserver, the blessed God, calleth upon thee by his spirit and word to be diligent, for the making thy calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 10. thou must provide for thy family, thou hast no time for this. Foolish worm, leave off thy vain and cursed pretences, and set up the business for which thou wast sent into the world, even the glorifying and obeying the Lord, or thou shalt have another manner of answer to thy simple excuses from the Judge of quick and dead, when for thy want of time to serve him in, he shall give thee an eternity to suffer in.

Have a special care also of the sanctification of the Lord's day in thy family; remember the living God commandeth thee, that thou, thy son, thy daughter, thy man-servant,

and

and thy maid-servant, and all within thy gate keep that day holy. Do not make the sins of others thine by thy pattern or permission; let not that Queen of days be deflowered or prophaned by idleness, earthly thoughts, words or actions; spend the whole time which thou sparest from the public ordinances, in secret and private duties, as praying, reading, singing, catechising, taking an account of thy children and servants, what they know of the mysteries of Christ, and particularly what they have learned that day. Esteem it a special privilege, a great mercy, that thou and thine may, upon that day, sequester yourselves wholly from worldly employments, and enjoy communion with the blessed God in the means of grace. This I shall be bold to tell thee, that religion, and the service of the most high God in thy family, dependeth much, yea very much, upon thy observation of the Lord's day; thou mayest expect its increase or decrease according to the sanctification or prophanation of it. In the primitive times when the question was, *Servasti Dominicum?* the answer was, *Christianus sum, omittere non possum.* Thou pretendest to be a Christian, make conscience of every minute of that day of Christ. Be sure that thou, and as many of thy family as can possibly be spared, attend with all diligence and reverence at the public place of worship; there God receiveth greatest praises, and there he bestoweth the choicest mercies. "O blessed are they that dwell in his house, blessed are they that wait at Wisdom's gate, that watch at the post of her doors," Prov. viii. In all things shew thyself a pattern to them that are under thy care and charge; the people committed to thy government, will sooner imitate thy doings then obey thy sayings. Sin cometh in at first by propagation, but is increased exceedingly by imitation; thou that hast thy children and servants following thee either to heaven or to hell, hast need chuse a right path, even the narrow way that leadeth to life. Weigh thy words, considering that they will learn thy language; avoid those sinful expressions of *faith* and *truth* (let your yea be yea, and nay nay, for whatsoever is more is evil) of repeating others oaths, of speaking irreverently of the great God and his word, of wishing evil to any man; for the command is, Bless them that curse, Matth. v. 44. let no evil communication proceed

out of thy lips, but let thy speech be seasoned with grace, that it may administer good, and be exemplary to the hearers. Look well to thy works, that they may be agreeable to the word of God.

In thy religious performances especially manifest all reverence, fervency and seriousness, that thy children and servants may see that thou art in earnest about soul-affairs, about eternity-concernments; thou little knowest how profitable such a pattern may be unto them. Do thy utmost, use all means commanded thee to save thyself and those that dwell with thee*.

Be confident that shortly Christ will say to thee as Eliah to David, With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? What is become of the children and servants which I intrusted thee with? Will it be enough thinkest thou for thee to answer, Lord, for my children, I brought them up without any charge to the parish; or Lord, I bred them gentlemen, or put them out to trades, or I left them competent estates. And for my servants, I paid them all their wages, gave them their meat and drink, according to my agreement with them.—When Christ shall reply, Man, what is become of their souls which I created capable of the immediate fruition of my life, which I redeemed with my precious blood? what shame will then cover thy face, and what horror fill thy heart, when the blood of their souls shall be required of thee! Oh therefore let Joshua's practice and resolution be thine, That thou and thy house will serve the Lord." Josh. xxiv. 15.

Be careful of getting into a lukewarm state, or dead formality. One that was afraid of this, thought it would be best, in Class-Meetings, sometimes to begin the meeting with prayer, and not sing; and sometimes to sing and not to pray; and sometimes neither to sing nor pray, but to begin with enquiring of the state of their souls; and, in the conclusion, all to pray that possibly can, and to be very short and lively. Those that have been in the way for many years, and have been under bondage to the *Enemy*, and could never

* Call your family together at a timely hour, when they are lively, before they begin to be heavy and sleepy, then devotion will have little if any effect

never break through to pray in public, should be encouraged; that by being open, free, simple, loving, and of a lamb-like spirit, and strive to bear with one another's infirmities, and so fulfil the law of Christ. If there were more of this spirit cultivated amongst Christians, I believe there would not so much deadness and barrenness be evidenced amongst many of them. For instance, there was a woman lately of Leeds, who paid a visit to a neighbouring town; and I believe her a servant of God, she being of an open, free, simple, and loving spirit: Being at tea with five or six women, one of whom had been in the *way* twenty-four years, and never had *prayed* in public in all her life; yet, through the simplicity and persuasion of this woman, they all went to *prayer*; and the power of God was felt amongst them, and they were all greatly blessed. I suppose none of them had ever prayed in public before! O that there was more of this loving spirit evidenced amongst us! The fruits of it would soon be seen.

What need then is there to be *always ready*, seeing that Death is making such havock in the earth!——It is supposed, by the best computations, that, in one year, there dies thirty millions of people!—in one day, 82,133!—and, in one hour, 3,422!—in the world, one day with another, commonly!——Then what must there do now at present, by pestilence and sword!!!

Let Religion be in your families, not as a matter *by the bye*, to be minded at leisure, when the world will give you leave, but the standing business of the house: let them have your *prayers* as *duly* as their meals. Is there *any* of your families but have time for their taking food? Wretched man! Canst thou not find time to *pray* in?

Settle it in your hearts, that your souls are bound up in the souls of your *family*; they are committed unto *you*, and if *they* be lost through *your* neglect, *they* will be required at *your* hands. Brethren, if you do not, you shall know, that the charge of souls is a *heavy* charge, and that the blood of souls is a *heavy* guilt. O man! hast thou a charge of souls to answer for, and dost thou not yet bestir thyself for them, that their blood be not found in *thy* skirts? Wilt thou do no more for immortal souls than thou wouldst do for the beasts
that

that perish? What dost thou do for thy children and servants? Thou providest meat and drink for them, agreeable to their nature; and dost thou not the same for thy beasts? Thou givest them medicines, and cherishest them when they be sick; and dost thou not the same for thy swine?

Take the first opportunity, when God gives a fit season for any duty. Let not Satan beguile you, by telling you of another or better time. It may be, thou hast a purpose to reprove thy brother for his sin; but how long wilt thou be purposing? Now God gives thee an opportunity; it may be, thy backward heart saith, *not now, but another time*, and so puts it off till he or thyself be removed, and he is hardened; then, at least, thou art guilty of the sin that he commits in the mean while, because *thou hast not done thy duty* to prevent it. It is in thine heart to deal with thine unconverted friend or neighbour about his spiritual state; but it may be, while thou art delaying, Death comes and snatches him away in his sins, or takes thee off, and so farewell for ever to any opportunity of doing the soul of *thy brother any good*. How often are the closet-duties hindered, or miserably disturbed, for want of care to lay hold on the first opportunity? We think another hour in the day may do as well, but then one thing or another unexpectedly falls in, so that nothing is done to purpose; therefore, beware of this cheat. A man can scarce peep into the world, but one briar or thorn, or other, will catch him; therefore, take opportunity by the foretop.—Our Saviour would take his season for prayer before day, when his other work was pressing.—Mark i. 35.

What do ye more than others?

Ques. Wherein should Christians be singular in their obedience? or, What *may* and *must* they do *more* than others?

Ans. Take the answer of these four following Rules, containing the character and compass of a Christian.

Rule I. *Heartily to love them that slight you, and to wish and seek the good of those that hate you, and seek to hurt you:* this is the very thing urged in the text, If you salute your brethren only, and love them that love you, do not even the Publicans the same? Matth. v. 44, 46. To love them that do respect and value us, is what every one can do; but

to love them that think meanly on us, and have prejudice and hard thoughts against us, and to speak well of them that speak evil of us (as the sweet-spirited *Calvin*.) [Let *Luther* call me dog or devil, I will say of him nevertheless, he is a precious servant of Christ Jesus.] This is to do more than others. Thus the Martyr *Cranmer*, of whom it was a Proverb, "Do the Bishop of Canterbury a displeasure, and you shall ever have him your friend." Thus that holy man, in his much to be lamented parting words, "I had never any greater pleasure in all my life, than to forget and forgive injuries, and to shew kindness to them that sought evil to me." Study who have offended and disobliged you, and slighted you, and keep up good thoughts of them, (if the cause will bear it) and speak nothing but good of them, and think what kindness you may shew them. Pray for them, wish well for them, so shall you be the children of your Father which is in heaven, *Matth. v. 45*.

Rule II. *To swim against the stream of the multitude.* The dead fish will swim with, but the living against the stream. Many will turn Jews when their interest will carry it in the world; when religion is in fashion, every one will be in it, but to bear head against the current of the times, and to be for strict godliness in all your ways, when the stream runs quite against it, to bear it down, and to resolve as *David* did, to be yet more vile, this is to be and to do more than others. The Samaritans will needs be Jews when *Alexander* favours and helps them, but when *Antiochus* bloodily rages against them (as in the time of the *Maccabees*) then they will be none of the kin, but pretend themselves to be of another stock, (which by the way was the reason of the deadly hatred afterwards between the Jews and them) but to be singular in your good choice and resolutions, with *Joshua*, though all should vote against you with one consent; and with *Noah*, to be perfect in our generations, when ever so adulterous, and to walk with God when all flesh have corrupted their way, and tread a contrary course; this is to do more than others. Thus the three children, or rather three champions, who would not fear the frowns of the multitude, nor the frowns of the greater ones, nor the charge of singularity, but when all the princes, governors, captains, counsellors,

tellors, sheriffs, and all the people, nations, and languages, fell down and worshipped, they stood by themselves, and would not sinfully comply, Dan. iii. 3, 7, 18.

Rule III. *To take more care of that which is most out of sight.* A christian's eye is much on the things least seen; first upon his heart, herein he doth exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, whose great care was to keep all fair and clean that came to view, but looked no further: make great conscience of your carriage in secret, and let your main guard be upon your hearts, and this will be more than others reach to. This was Paul's care, to keep his conscience, his inside, clean and undefiled, Acts xxiv. 16. and Job's care, that though all the world did reproach him, he might not put a reproach in the mouth of his conscience, Job xxvii. 6. and David's care, that his heart might be clean. Secondly, on his hope. Others look to the things seen, things in hand; but the true believer eyes his hopes, walks by faith, not by sight, and lives a quite different life from any others in the world besides; as living upon the hopes of heaven doth differ from living on the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world.

Rule IV. *To be merciful to others feelings, and very severe to our own.* The noble Roman Cato could more easily forgive any than himself. To aggravate our own evils, and so have an excuse ready for our brother's, and to censure ourselves freely, and to come with the mantle behind us to cover our brother, this is to do more than others. The hypocrite is a censor abroad; he is like the eye that can see any thing but itself; he can discern a moat in his brother's eye, but not a beam in his own. But the servant of God rebukes others with meekness, but he falls out easily and bitterly with himself.

" But ah how blind! how weak we are!

" How frail! how apt to turn aside!

" LORD we depend upon thy care,

" And ask thy spirit for our guide.

" Thy fair example may we trace,

" To teach us what we ought to be;

" Make us by thy transforming grace,

" Dear Saviour daily more like thee."

How

How beautiful would it be if a religious family would make an agreement every morning, that if any one in the family saw another do any thing wrong, either in walking or talking, that is, either in word or deed; I say for a family, or even any society, to make this agreement one with another not to be offended, but all to be done in a spirit of love, what circumspection it would cause, for I find a wish in my mind that any body would tell me when they see me doing any thing that is likely to be displeasing to God or hurtful to my fellow-creatures.

There is one thing more I could wish to observe, that is, how many thousands of families there are that will sit down to a rich meal, and eat and drink, and never ask God's blessing upon it! Shocking to think of.——Again, how many there are that will ask a blessing when they are going to receive it, but after will rise from the table without ever returning thanks at all! How sinful and displeasing must this be to God! For there must be a greater call for thankfulness when we have received a blessing, than when we have not.——I remember a person in Leeds saying, If he should happen to put a taste of bread in his mouth unthinking, he has put it out again, till he asked the Lord's blessing upon it.

ON WEEKLY CLASS-MEETINGS.

IT has been found, by various and long experience, that meetings for Christian fellowship are the best cement of religious society, and have the happiest tendency to promote a right understanding, and preserve a pure affection among all its members. Where the leader is properly qualified, and where the people are lively, simple, and open, the utility of these meetings is found to exceed every thing which has been advanced in their favour. It is not the limits of a small treatise, but a life of experience, that can adequately acquaint us with all their excellence and worth. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged, that where the people are wanting in piety, simplicity, and freedom, the true end of these social means is wholly subverted, and the devotion rendered both

tedious and unprofitable. I shall therefore endeavour to point out the principal of these defects, and to prescribe their remedies.

1. The Leader should be a man of mature and sound experience, and a strict observer of the work of God upon his own soul. He should be well acquainted with all the ways in which the Lord is pleased to lead and try his people, and with the various effects of grace upon men of different habits and dispositions. He should also be well acquainted with human nature, both in a moral and religious view; with the devices of Satan, and the artful insinuations of carnal men. He that would shew others the way to heaven must be thoroughly acquainted with it himself. A maturity of wisdom and judgment is requisite in the spiritual manner, who is charged to pilot the inestimable soul through the waves and storms, the rocks and shoals of life, where *many* have sunk or split.

On the subject of coming close and searching the heart, we have an excellent Fragment, by the late Mr C. PERONET. which is recommended by the Rev. Mr WESLEY. — It here follows in his own words :—

“ It is the duty of Leaders,” saith he, “ 1. To enquire whether *they now* believe? Now *enjoy* the life of God?—Whether *they* grow herein or decay? If *they decay*, What is the cause, and what the cure? 2. Whether *they* aim at being *wholly devoted* to God, or would keep something back? Whether *they* see God’s hand in all that betals them? And how *they* bear what he lays upon them? 3. Whether *they* take up their cross *daily*? Resist the bent of nature? Oppose self-love in all its hidden forms, and discover it through all its disguises? 4. Whether *they* humble themselves in *every* thing? Are willing to be blamed and despised for well-doing? Account it the greatest honour that Christ appoints them to walk with himself, in the paths that are *peculiarly his own*? To examine *closely* whether they are willing to drink of *his cup*, and to be baptized with *his baptism*? 5. Whether *they* can *cordially* love those that despitefully use and persecute them? Justify the ways of God in thus dealing with them? And, in all *they* suffer, seek the destruction of

of inward *idolatry* and impatience? How *they* conquer self-will, in all its spiritual forms? See through all its disguises, seeking itself, when it pretends to seek nothing but the *glory* of God? 6. Whether they are simple, open, free, and without reserve in speaking? And see it their *duty* and privilege so to be? 7. To enquire concerning *prayer*, the answers to *prayer*, faith in Christ, distrust of themselves, consciousness of their own vileness and nothingness? 8. How *they* improve their talents? What zeal *they* have for doing good in all *they* do, or suffer, or receive from God? Whether *they* live *above* it, making Christ their all, and offering up to God nothing for acceptance, but his life and death? —9. Whether *they* have a clear, full, abiding conviction, that, without inward, complete, universal holiness, no man shall see the Lord? That Christ was sacrificed for us, that we might be a whole burnt-sacrifice to God; and that having received the Lord Jesus Christ will profit us nothing, unless we *steadily* and *uniformly* walk in him.” *

As this is a *duty* to which I am afraid not more than one half of our Leaders are equal; and as the experience of an individual will mostly be inadequate to enable him to judge and advise in the numerous cases of a whole class, he should, by reading the Lives of good men, acquaint himself with experience in general. The ARMINIAN, or, more *properly*, the METHODIST MAGAZINE, is admirably adapted to furnish the mind with this kind of knowledge. After he is well informed concerning these writings, he may *safely* proceed to the experience of Christians of other denominations, and be capable to judge of their comparative merit. In reading Christian experience, he should particularly remark their distresses, trials, and temptations, and the manner of their deliverance; where *they* cried, and where *they* are worthy of imitation. But *especially* he should be conversant in the HOLY SCRIPTURES. The precepts, promises, threatenings, and the occasions on which *they* were given, he should *clearly* understand, and *familiarly* remember. He will then comfort according to the fulness of the Gospel, or caution with prudence and authority. He will restore the fallen

fallen, instruct the ignorant, and strengthen the weak. He will consider the class as his spiritual family, and next to their immediate pastors be their dearest friend on earth.

II. It is requisite also, that the people be open, lively, and affectionate. And indeed, a profession of religion, without the life and love of God in our heart, is a poor and empty thing. As it is the nature and design of Christianity to purify the soul from sin, and restore it to the image and favour of its Maker, we should on no account fall short of the hope of our calling. The gain of the whole world is insufficient to compensate for the loss of one smile from our Heavenly Father. Whatever company or affairs we are engaged with, we should be careful to maintain communion with God; that we *may rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks*; that the great law of the new covenant may be written on our hearts, *I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.*

Those who live, or endeavour to live in this happy state, have always something to speak in their class which is animating and instructive, and the people hang upon their lips for edification and comfort. By living in the Divine presence they acquire a calmness and composure of mind, which raises them above the fear of man, and above the hurry and flutter which the timid often find in speaking. They relate the blessed opportunities they have had in public or private devotion, their temptations and trials, their faults and comforts, with all that ease and freedom which mark a humble and devoted mind. They never make the meeting tedious and dull by a repetition of the same things from week to week; by using little else than common-place terms, or affecting the style and manner of others. To do so is sure to produce an unpleasant effect, and indicates the soul to be in a slothful and lukewarm; or, that what we say is not our own, but borrowed from others. Their experience is always interesting, original, and new; because it is impossible that the Lord should forget them for a whole week, or even for a single moment; and the reputation and respect they acquire among their brethren, is that of *Fathers and pillars in the church of God.*

